



# **The Celebration of Lent**

**LITURGICAL COMMISSION**

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We apologize for the mutilation of the enclosed copy of the CILLENATION OF LENT. We did not follow accepted procedure to obtain permission to reprint the texts of Ash Wednesday. Therefore, the pages (23 - 27) on which those texts appeared had to be removed before we could distribute the book. Thank you for your understanding.



# The Celebration of Lent


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One

PREPARING FOR LENT

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The Second Vatican Council described the purpose of Lent in the Constitution on the Liturgy (art. 109): "The Lenten season . . . recalls baptism or prepares for it; . . . it stresses a penitential spirit." The Council then directed that these baptismal and penitential themes were to be emphasized in the reformed rites, ceremonies, and texts.

At first, it may sound strange to characterize Lent in terms of Baptism. Our traditional appreciation of the season has moved on the level of "practices of self-denial." The broader scope indicated by the liturgical reform of the past decade (and contained in the texts of the Lectionary for Mass and in the prayers of that part of the Roman Missal already published in English) invites us to see the season as a time of conversion—which is the purpose of any self-denial or penance.

Perhaps the baptismal nature of Lent is so minimally noticed because Baptism itself in our practice stands on the periphery of Church life. We speak of the sacrament, whether it be for infants or for adults, as a community celebration—but we do not do it that way. The new Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, now in translation, calls this attitude into question and poses a serious challenge to our "pastoral" structures as we look forward to its implementation.

The "baptismal" nature of Lent is for everyone, both the to-be-baptized and the already-baptized. Baptism is the sacrament of conversion and initiation; it specifies all those conversions to which the Catholic is called during his lifetime, including the conversion of the Lenten season.

Even the baptized need conversion, a change of heart achieved for them in that sacrament which has been called a "second Baptism," the sacrament of Penance. For these reasons, Lent begins each year with a sign of conversion, ashes. And now, in addition to the traditional formula accompanying their imposition ("Remember, man, that you are dust"), the celebrant may use Christ's challenging invitation from Mark's Gospel: "Turn away from sin and believe the Gospel!" Turn away—that is: repent, change your heart, be converted.

The ashes are a sign of initiation into conversion. Must the conversion begin so abruptly, on Ash Wednesday, with simultaneous use and explanation of the sign? One of the purposes of the Septuagesima sea-

[Illustrations on pages 6-7, 12-14, courtesy of Lawrence Madden, S.J., Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.]

# WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

What trip ARE You on  
THE Journey is about to begin  
ARE You going to make it o



NOW WE go up to JERUSALEM  
WHAT'S in it for you  
WHAT'S in you for it

COME SON <sup>the</sup> JOURNEY

DEPARTING

ASH WEDNESDAY

son, suppressed in the reformed calendar (1969), was to ease the transition between Christmas-Epiphany and Ash Wednesday-Lent. Unfortunately, it was also an imitation of Lent and a liturgical extension of the season. In explaining the suppression of Septuagesima, the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy declared:

It always was difficult to present the Septuagesima season to the people, for the words "Septuagesima," "Sexagesima," and "Quinquagesima" are rather strange to modern ears. They literally contradict the symbol of forty (= quadragesima). The season had no proper character of its own, except as an anticipation of Lent; even the texts in the Breviary were taken from the Ordinary of the Divine Office "throughout the year." The Alleluia will now be used in the liturgy up until Ash Wednesday itself.

It is possible to prepare for Lent without anticipating it. Preparation is necessary if a community and its members are to live the time to its fullest. Therefore, it is suggested that the three Ordinary Sundays immediately preceding Ash Wednesday be used to ready people to take on the baptismal and penitential commitments expressed in the signing with ashes. The following themes and ideas provide a foundation for homilies on the three Sundays:

#### February 10, 1974: Fifth Ordinary Sunday

##### Theme: FIRST CALL TO REPENTANCE

This Sunday's readings, found in the Lectionary under no. 76-C, contrast the holiness of God with the sinfulness of man. In the light of the coming Lent, this contrast becomes a call: to examine ourselves, to know who we are before the Lord, to reform our lives in welcome of him when he comes.

Isaiah 6: 1-2, 3-8. This introductory vision experienced by Isaiah is his call to prophesying. It is a searing and thunderous theophany whose force derives from the unalterable opposition between God and sin. The triple repetition ("holy, holy, holy") is the Hebrew superlative (= holiest) and emphasizes holiness as God's essential quality. Isaiah is overwhelmed by his unworthiness and keenly feels the need for purgation. By God's initiative the symbolic purification by fire is effected, preparing Isaiah for his mission.

I Corinthians 15: 1-11. Paul is conscious of his unworthiness to be an apostle and he candidly shares with the Corinthians his vivid awareness of God's gratuity in calling him. He reminds them to stand firm in the good news that he has preached to them. The summary of

that preaching is an outline of the events of Holy Week.

Luke 5: 1-11. Peter's experience parallels that of the prophet in the first reading. He sees in Jesus the holiness that Isaiah saw in Yahweh; the result is his admission of sinfulness. Jesus accepts Peter and purifies him for service not by fire but merely by a word that accepts and forgives. "Do not be afraid" is a phrase that recalls Easter; Jesus will speak them again to those to whom he appears after his resurrection (cf. Matthew 28: 5, 10; Mark 16: 6).

### February 17, 1974: Sixth Ordinary Sunday

Theme: RENEWED COMMITMENT TO THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Luke's Beatitudes, today's Gospel text (cf. Lectionary no. 79-C), are really questions that call us to re-examine our lives. Do we seek a life in conformity with the Lord or with the world? Do we live on the deepest level possible to us? Do we trust enough in the Lord to live by his promises? The coming season of Lent offers the opportunity to renew our commitment.

Jeremiah 17: 5-8. Of all the prophets, Jeremiah is the one most sensitive to Yahweh's love for his people and the one most conscientious regarding the people's ties to Yahweh through the covenant. The relationship is one of trust, for the Lord is trustworthy. To put our trust elsewhere is the height of folly. Both this reading and its responsorial psalm bear the same message: God is man's sole refuge; the just man's strength is in God.

I Corinthians 15: 12, 16-20. Appropriately enough, Paul's theme is the resurrection. He reminds us that our hope as Christians is based on Jesus' rising from the dead. If the resurrection is not the center of our faith, we are fools. How strong is our faith in the resurrection? Does it influence our lives? Are we preparing for the coming of Easter?

Luke 6: 17, 20-26. Luke's version of the Beatitudes calls us to examine the focus of our lives: what is central to my living, what is essential, what is unnecessary? Ash Wednesday is now only a week-and-a-half away; today, then, offers the occasion for detailing the community Lenten program (various practices of penance, celebrations, Holy Week, etc.) as opportunities for renewing one's commitment. The Gospel reminder of persecution identifies our repentance in the name of Christ as redemptive—for each of us, for the community, for the world.

February 24, 1974: Seventh Ordinary Sunday

Theme: REFORM YOUR LIVES—BE COMPASSIONATE

Today's readings, under Lectionary no. 82-C, summarize the purpose of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and the whole of Christian living! We are to live in love—in a continual deepening of love for the Father and for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Only in this light do the practices of Lent and the celebration of Holy Week take on their true meaning. This Lenten attitude will be proclaimed later this week, on Friday, in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Release those bound unjustly, untie the thongs of the yoke; set free the oppressed, break every yoke; share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked, and do not turn your back on your own."

I Samuel 26: 2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23. David finds his enemy Saul in his power but does not slay him. His compassion is one of the high points of the Old Testament. David's concern, however, was special: he feared to harm the "Lord's Anointed." We are called to a higher, more universal concern: we do more than fear to offend the Lord; we should reach out in a positive way to others, to share with them Jesus' love.

I Corinthians 15: 45-49. Paul reminds us of the Deuteronomic choice: "I set before you two ways, the way of life and the way of death. Choose life . . ." God's promise is that our fidelity will bring us a share in the resurrection: "So shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." The Lenten season that looks to Easter bears this same promise.

Luke 6: 27-38. This statement, a continuation of last Sunday's gospel text, is the clearest, most decisive—and harshest!—declaration of the Christian ideal set us by the Lord. We do not yet measure up fully to the Lord's expectations—but we should be on the move! We grow into the stature that is measured on his fullness. The criterion of our performance is not our own past ("I'm better than last year") or the status of others ("I am better than so-and-so"), but the Father's own love ("Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate").

This preparation on the three Sundays preceding Ash Wednesday will assist the sign of ashes to take on its full meaning as a dedication to conversion. In the course of Lent itself, that commitment may be emphasized in its relation to Baptism by beginning the Sunday celebrations with the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Holy Water, one of the options for the Penitential Rite in the Order of Mass (cf. Provisional

Sacramentary, pages 126-128). The invitation to prayer, with which the Rite begins, gives the theme of the blessing and sprinkling:

My brothers and sisters,  
let us ask the Lord our God  
to bless this water he has created,  
which we shall use to recall our baptism.  
May he renew us  
and keep us faithful to the Spirit  
we have all received.

The blessing prayers, from which the priest chooses one, continue this theme. For the sprinkling of the people, the celebrant "may move through the church."

Preparation means planning, and planning makes it possible to integrate the disparate celebrations, programs, and activities of Lent into a unity whose thrust can carry the community along, both psychologically and spiritually. For instance, in 1973, the campus ministers at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., presented the forty days of Lent as a "journey" in response to the Lord's invitation "Now let us go up to Jerusalem." All celebrations and programs were organized around this theme; the graphic results of this thematic approach may be found on pages 6-7, 12-14 of this booklet.

A parish in the diocese of Richmond, Virginia, offers the following description of its integrated Lenten activities for 1973.

Ash Wednesday. This day's cross of ashes does not last out the twenty-four hours. To make sure that the cross did not disappear from our parishioners' lives during the forty days of Lent, we invited each one to go home and make their own cross from materials around the house and to hang it in a prominent place as a reminder of the call to Lenten conversion. As Holy Saturday approached, they were asked to transform their crosses into crosses of joy, as a sign of the inner conversion and renewal which had taken place in their lives during Lent. In the foyer of the church on Ash Wednesday, we placed an eight-foot dead tree, to further emphasize the symbolism of the cross. We wished to call attention to our belief that "the same tree that brought death brought life." The tree remained in the foyer throughout Lent as a sign of conversion. On Holy Saturday, the people were invited to the church between 3:00 and 4:00 P.M. for coffee and punch and cookies, to exchange Easter wishes, and to hang their joy crosses on the dead tree to bring it to life. We began the project not knowing how many people would actually follow through, but by Easter Sunday morning the tree was loaded with joy crosses of the most astounding creativity. It was an obvious sign of resurrection—not only of the new life in individuals but also in our parish community, brought about by the conversion of Lent.



# FROM LIBERATION TO FREEDOM

-12-

in the wilderness journey

# THE BIRTH

part of Christ's Journey

Let us come up to

HOLY THURSDAY

THE JOURNEY through HOLY WEEK

HOLY SATURDAY

GOOD FRIDAY

EASTER  
SUNDAY



Lenten Sundays. Three of our adult converts, moving toward baptism or reception into full communion, went through the stages of immediate preparation at a different Mass each Sunday. Thus we highlighted the community they were entering and emphasized the community's responsibility for them. Sundays were also devoted to the theme of prayer. We preached two homilies on "The Meaning of Prayer in the Life of Today's Christian." After the second homily, we passed out to all the parishioners a self-evaluation form on personal prayer life. On the third Sunday, we let the pews "talk back" and asked the people to share what prayer meant to them. Each Sunday evening, we conducted a prayer service, using a variety of forms. One Sunday evening, the teenagers presented a dramatic Way of the Cross in the sanctuary. The presentation involved singing as well as interpretative dance. The church was packed that evening and we felt that the young people had contributed significantly to the community's celebration of the spirit of the season.

Passion (Palm) Sunday. The children of all the elementary grades participated in one or another of the processions. Each class made something festive to carry: pinwheels, large paper flowers, posters, decorated balloons, etc. For the solemn procession of palms and spring branches, we asked each neighborhood to make a banner to identify their willingness to share Christ's journey. The religious ed children grouped themselves according to classes in a large open field in front of the church, and adult parishioners assembled behind their neighborhood banners. The mood was festive and exciting. Before the procession began, each class and neighborhood was asked if they were ready to follow Jesus. All responded, "We are ready and willing." The procession started with the celebrant leading a small horse draped with spring branches. During the reading of the Passion, we invited the people to be seated and played as background music "In deepest grief" from Bach's Passion According to Matthew, followed by Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring. This did much to create a reflective mood.

Holy Thursday. For the Liturgy of the Word, three readers presented the readings of the Holy Thursday events to the background music of "Exodus" and "Song of Joy." At the conclusion, the celebrant entered with twelve members of the parish council. They took their places on benches and the foot-washing began immediately. The mood was enhanced by the use of theater lights. After the foot-washing in the sanctuary, the parish council members formed four groups of three and went out into the congregation to wash the feet of representatives of people from the parish. The theme of the day was "Called to Serve." After the homily, each of the priests renewed their commitment to priesthood in terms of service to this community. The sisters and parish staff renewed their commitment to service. The parishioners were then invited to rededicate themselves, as a group and as individuals. The sign of peace then took place; for about ten minutes, priests, parish council members, and parishioners

mingled throughout the church. The entire congregation was seated for the Liturgy of the Eucharist while the celebrants and parish council sat at a U-shaped table in the sanctuary.

Good Friday. The theme of this day was "Called to Life Through Death." During the reading of the Passion, we used a screen; on one half, slides of traditional Passion scenes were projected, and on the other half slides of contemporary life in parallel situations appeared. For the veneration of the cross, we had a procession with four crosses: one simple one of wood, another covered with pictures of suffering cut out in the shape of crosses and pasted on, and a third traditional large crucifix. After each of these first three crosses entered the church, it was picked out by a spotlight as the people sang the refrain from "Lift High the Cross." The fourth cross was a joy cross, decorated with bells, yarn birds, and flowers. To its entrance, the people responded, "And I will raise him up." This proved to be an excellent way in which to temper the funereal mood of Good Friday.

Holy Saturday. The high point of the Easter Vigil came after the Baptism and Confirmation of the converts. The members of the congregation came forward to welcome them into the community as the choir sang "Consider Yourself At Home." For the sign of peace, we distributed three hundred small crepe paper butterflies and invited each person to pin one on somebody else with the wish, "Have new life," or "Be a new person. A parish Easter party followed, to celebrate with the new converts and the rest of the parish community.

[Two more suggestions concerning the public uses of large crosses during the Lenten season are given on the following page.]

This integrated approach can center the attention of the community throughout Lent and give a coherence to the season that includes both baptismal and penitential aspects in the context of Christian living. Lent becomes, not a denial of life, but its renewal (which is the purpose of conversion: cf. Ezekiel 33: 19). The essence of Lent consists of the forty days spent by the total Christian community in living a process of conversion. It can be seen as a celebration, extended in time and space, of the paschal mystery. In this season, the Body of Christ shows forth the death and resurrection of Jesus not only liturgically, but also spiritually and physically in the lives and bodies of believers.

Personal resolutions to practice self-denial (i. e. to turn oneself around, to be converted) would be meaningless unless placed in a community context and in a prayer context. The creation of praying communities handily answers both of these demands simultaneously. Some of this spirit could be promoted through special communities within the larger community, to stand as signs, examples and valida-

1.



2.



3.



[Photographs: sanctuary of Saint Constance Church, Chicago. 1. Passion Sunday—cross with palms. 2. Good Friday—unadorned cross. 3. Holy Saturday, Easter—cross with winding sheet.]

[The following comments are from The Worship Workshop, a monthly published by Avery and Marsh, 628 S. Main, Lima, OH 45804.]

Let Lent be visible. You see, most of the world will not even notice Lent and not even think about Holy Week unless their attention is grabbed vigorously by the Christians in their town. So put a big and rugged cross in a prominent place in the church, one made by the men of the congregation. Then put one out on the lawn facing the street. (Get news coverage. Plan an outdoor passion play for Good Friday.) If you take this suggestion, then drape the cross with black cloth during Maundy Thursday or Good Friday observances. Decorate this same cross for Easter with ivy and lilies, or other spring flowers, or palm branches (symbols of victory). The transformation is marvelous to see.

tions of what all are attempting. For instance, on the First Sunday of Lent, one parish distributed to all adults and teens copies of the New Testament (Good News for Modern Man edition) with a reading guide for the first week of Lent. On succeeding Sundays, reading guides were passed out for the weeks that followed. Keyed to the readings suggested in the guides, the Sunday sermons spoke of finding Jesus—in his Word, in prayer, in liturgy, in others. Such an approach, keyed to various programs during the weeks, creates an "atmosphere," and gives substance to the community's celebration of the season. In this particular case, the parish offered on week nights throughout Lent the following: a shared prayer experience, a marriage "revival," a program on teen-parent communication, a presentation on formation of conscience.

Often, a brainstorming session on a particular theme can yield fruitful results. In the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Northwest Cluster of priests came up with this lengthy list on prayer:

#### Preparation before Lent

1. Alert parish organizations to plan their Lenten programs with some time (15 minutes?) set aside at all meetings for some prayer experience.
2. Hold staff meetings to discuss, plan, and experience prayer programs. Be concrete, e.g. each week of Lent might have a different emphasis, or the same day of each week would have a similar emphasis, for instance, all Fridays.
3. Emphasize personal dying and rising throughout Lent so as to keep the paschal mystery in focus.
4. Consider preaching on the topic of prayer on each of the Sundays of Lent.
5. Be sure to create a prayer impact on Ash Wednesday, a day that gives opportunity to reach great numbers with careful planning.
6. While the highpoint of the program should be prayerful participation in the Easter Triduum, some programs should be projected beyond Lent to continue the fostering of prayer.

#### Personal Prayer

7. Set an example—let the people see us praying.
8. Emphasize opportunities for personal prayer during the liturgy, e.g. the pause at the opening prayer, the penitential rite, after each reading and the homily, the general intercessions, the period after communion, etc. At times, it would be helpful to introduce the personal prayer with a brief comment, to focus the activity.
9. Encourage the people to make the Way of the Cross individually with their own personal reflections and prayers. School



students might make a booklet of this kind during Lent.

10. Consider using other areas for personal prayer, e.g. convent chapel, a family home shrine, or prepare an area or setting for personal prayer when the people are together.

11. Encourage personal prayer at a specific time each day, e.g. morning, evening, meals, etc.

12. Plan a Eucharistic Day, from after the last morning Mass until late afternoon or evening, with ample time and encouragement for personal prayer (many ideas in Manual for Eucharistic Devotion, Liturgy Commission, 300 West Ottawa Street, Lansing, MI 48933).

13. Encourage earlier arrival for Mass preparation, and remaining afterward for personal prayer.

14. Provide a convenient Bible for the people in church, so that they can conveniently use it for personal prayer.

15. Provide a selection of Way of the Cross booklets in the vestibule or at the door of the church so that people can make the devotion at their own convenient time and in their own preferred manner.

16. Print an appropriate prayer each Sunday in the bulletin, for use at home during the week.

### Common Prayer

17. Consider prayer on different levels: parish, rectory, convent, school, organizations, family, couples, etc. Also different age groups.

18. Get people in their natural element, where they are, rather than try to get them out at some fixed time for prayer.

19. Emphasize that penance is prayer by proposing a parish-wide penance, e.g. select a day of the week (Friday?) when the whole parish would be invited to participate in the penance by having a poverty meal, foregoing desserts, refraining from smoking or alcohol, etc. (The proceeds saved might be collected for some charitable purpose.)

20. Train a core team to move through groups in the parish.

21. Provide greater prayer experience at the time of death or at the Wake Service.

22. Emphasize prayerful reception of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Bless and distribute ashes according to church norms: at each Mass after the homily, or only in conjunction with a scripture service. A homily emphasizing the theme of prayer would be fitting. This might mean rearranging the Mass schedule for the day, but it would be worth it.

23. A small stone (= hardness of heart) might be given to each person receiving ashes. It could be kept and handled frequently during Lent as a reminder of Lenten resolution to move the stone that entombs us, to rise with the Lord.

24. Pilgrimage is a form of prayer. Families or groups might journey to a selected, special place for prayer.

In this time of preparation for the Holy Year 1975, the creation of praying communities takes on added meaning in light of the purpose of the Holy Year itself: renewal and reconciliation. A useful creation in Lent of 1974 would be an order of penitents, a group of people who would pledge themselves to mutual support and growth in conversion during the weeks of Lent. The Lenten call to conversion is a challenge and an invitation to enter into a process, the stages of which appear in the parable of the prodigal son who first comes to his senses (reflection), then makes his decision, begins the return journey (conversion), at the end of which he makes his confession to his father and is reconciled.

In the early Church, penance was a serious undertaking. Those who had sinned publicly were publicly invited to do penance, in preparation for the celebration of Easter. Once they had acknowledged their sin to the bishop in the presence of the community, they were barred from the community until they did penance. During the season of Lent, they were made to wear sackcloth and ashes, and sit at the entrance of the church begging the members of the community to pray for them. They were not admitted to the eucharistic assembly. On Holy Thursday they were reconciled to the community and given absolution by the bishop. They shared the sign of peace with the congregation and were permitted back into the eucharistic assembly so that they might celebrate the sacred triduum with the congregation.

In later centuries, when the practice of public penance declined, a group of people in the community elected to do severe penance for the whole community—fasting, prayer, even physical punishment were part of this practice. The group was publicly symbolized by distinctive clothing (usually sackcloth). This practice too declined in time. But it is a significant reminder to us of the need of penance, not just for ourselves but for the whole community.

In light of this tradition, it is suggested that groups within the parish during the season of Lent take upon themselves some penitential practice for the good of the whole parish and in line with the nature of their particular group. Thus the "order of penitents" could apply to the orientation of all groups within the parish community.

Prayer groups might take on prayer for a particular intention, e.g. unity within the parish, or an increase of Spirit within the total community. Service organizations might take up a particular cause, e.g. the poor, or needy families within the parish, the sick, the elderly, the shut-ins, etc. Choirs might take as their "penance" a real dedication to preparing the music for Lent and Holy Week. The parish council could rededicate its work to the continual growth of Christ's life within the parish. The possibilities are numerous.

Each group should meet before Ash Wednesday to decide on the particular form of penance and/or service. These individual projects might be advertized to the parish at large, either through the bulletin or by public announcement on Ash Wednesday. Inclusion in the general intercessions on that day would be appropriate.

Finally these groups could ratify their Lenten activity at the end of the season in a communal celebration of the sacrament of Penance. During the season itself, celebrations of support and encouragement might be conveniently scheduled from time to time; suggestions for such celebrations may be gathered from the booklet Seven Penance Services (75¢ from Liturgy Training, 5947 North Manton, Chicago, IL 60646).

The Liturgy Training Program of the Archdiocese of Chicago (address given at the end of the last paragraph) has made available a wealth of material on "spiritual renewal in prayer" which will prove of value not only for this Lent but also throughout the year. The set of thirty-three booklets on various aspects of prayer within the parish community may be obtained from Liturgy Training for eight dollars.

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Two  
ASH WEDNESDAY

---

In the early Church, the forty days of Lent began on the First Sunday of Lent and ended on Holy Thursday, as we read in the sermons of St. Leo the Great. Even the Roman Missal and Breviary followed this computation down to our own day. But the custom of beginning the Lenten fast on the Wednesday before the First Sunday is just as venerable, going back to the sixth or seventh century. Indeed, the distribution of ashes on that day gives to Ash Wednesday, in the minds of many Catholics, a solemnity that others feasts of higher rank seemingly lack.

It is for this reason that the revision of the liturgical calendar did not include a restoration of the symbolic forty days in their fullness, even though the number forty has scriptural warrant. One thinks of Jesus' fast of forty days in the desert; of the forty years during which the chosen people wandered in the wastes of Sinai; of the forty days which Moses spent on the mountain with God; of the forty days during which Goliath challenged the army of Saul (it was on the fortieth day that David made his appearance); of the forty days of Elijah's journey to Horeb; of the forty days of Jonah's penitential preaching to the inhabitants of Nineveh.

Both by title and by action, the liturgy of Ash Wednesday focuses attention on the symbol of ashes. The new Roman Missal (partially available now in the provisional Sacramentary for Sundays; soon to be published in complete English translation) moves the blessing and distribution of ashes into the structure of the celebration of Mass, placing it immediately after the homily. Outside Mass, the ceremony is celebrated as part of a scripture service. The proclamation of scripture makes sense: how can we take on ashes until God's Word has summoned us to repentance and called us to faith? The ashes are the sign of our response, that we have heard and wish to obey.

The Lectionary for Mass (no. 220) assigns the following passages for Ash Wednesday:

- (1) Joel 2: 12-18
- (2) II Corinthians 5: 20 - 6: 2
- (3) Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18



After the Greeting: Today we begin a journey of penance in imitation of the Lord Jesus. It is he who calls us to die to ourselves in penitential discipline, to

come alive to God in prayer, to turn to others in loving service. The ashes we take on are a sign of our response to this call. In our celebration, God will encourage us with his Word and strengthen us with the Body and Blood of his Son. In this way, we begin our Lenten li-

ving as heartfelt conversion, not just superficial piety.

First Reading:

A reading from the Book of the prophet Joel. The prophet urges us to true penance, internal as well as external.

Second Reading:

A reading from the second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. The purpose of Lent, the apostle explains, is that we be converted.

After Blessing  
of the Ashes:

Brothers and sisters, you are now invited to come forward. Receive the ashes which are the dust of the earth, to which we must return. For only if we die to ourselves will God raise

us up to eternal life. [Followed by directions which may be necessary for the good order of distribution.]

After Prayer  
over the Gifts:

In the Eucharistic Prayer, Christ leads us toward the goal of our Lenten living: victory

over sin and death.

Before Blessing  
and Dismissal:

As we leave, we are men and women marked—  
inside and out—with the sign of conversion.

The following set of general intercessions is suggested:

In the sacrament of Baptism,  
we began to share in the re-  
surrection of our Lord Jesus  
Christ. In this Lenten season  
we are called to deepen our  
baptismal commitment. We  
pledge ourselves, by the ash-  
es we now wear, to die to  
self and come alive to God.  
We make our response in  
prayer by saying: "Lead us  
to life, O Lord."

— that the Church may glory  
in the cross of Christ in this  
time of penance and prepara-  
tion, we pray to the Lord.

— that our Pope, our Bishop,  
and all the Church's ministers  
may lead men to true repen-  
tance and conversion of heart,  
we pray to the Lord.

— that Christians everywhere  
may be joined closer to the  
Lord and to each other in  
these forty days, we pray to  
the Lord.

— that this Lent may be a  
time for all the world to  
search for freedom from sla-  
very to death and sin, we  
pray to the Lord.

— that all of us who have ga-  
thered to put on ashes may al-  
so take on the spirit of pen-  
ance, we pray to the Lord.

Concluding Prayer

God our Father,  
You sent Your only Son into this world  
to deliver us from evil.  
He fulfilled His mission to the end,  
and became a source of life and joy for us.  
We ask You to perfect us in this time of Lent,  
so that Jesus may truly live in our midst,  
as He now lives with You:  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

A Canadian parish issued the following community challenge on Ash Wednesday:

In response to a recent man-in-the-street interview conducted by a Catholic newspaper, a majority of Catholics responded that they felt it was a lot easier to be Catholic today than when they were children. "After our strict upbringing," answered one man, "the Church has gone permissive. You don't have to fast anymore ... you can eat meat on Friday. The Catholic religion is getting watered-down." Others said the Church seems to be losing its commitment to penance and to the cross.

One thing that has not changed is Jesus' stirring challenge: IF A MAN WISHES TO COME AFTER ME HE MUST DENY HIS VERY SELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS.

The mature Catholic has a serious personal responsibility to do penance. Rules may be fewer but the obligation remains the same. Indeed, the ways in which we can meet our Christian penitential obligations have trebled. True penance is not limited to "giving up this or that 'goodie.'" True penance challenges us to face ourselves honestly and give up false patterns of thinking or living. It concentrates us on freeing ourselves from self-centeredness, from coldness and harshness toward family, friends and fellow workers, from grudging service in the cause of Christ.

Today, we begin the season of Lent. We are sum-

moned to repent of sin, to reassess our priorities, to turn wholeheartedly to the way of Christ. Ages ago, the people of Israel entered the desert wilderness to journey toward the Promised Land. This very day, seven hundred million Catholics set out on a pilgrimage of love toward Easter, to find new life in the risen Christ.

The chosen people of Israel moved slowly across the desert toward their homeland. They gradually learned to WORSHIP together, to SACRIFICE together, to REJOICE together. They grew conscious of their total dependence on God and of their need to support one another.

Today, we are asked to imitate the example of Jesus who went into the desert to fast and pray for forty days. Those six weeks were a time of suffering and prayer for the salvation of men. Each year, as Lent begins, Christ goes back into the desert. This year, we go with him.

As we begin our Lenten march through the desert to the promised glory of Easter, several possibilities suggest themselves:

Silence. Noise can give us an excuse for not listening to the voice of Christ. A steady diet of television viewing, the cacophony of blaring radios, the distractions of records or tapes, etc.—there can be no Lenten desert in the midst of such noise.

Prayer and Scripture. There can be no Lent without prayer, prayer that rises from our hearts and lips through Christ to the Father. Since our homes are the focus of our lives, they must also be the place of our Lenten praying. The Bible, the history of God's people, should be out of storage, opened up, and used.

Eucharist. The Mass is the privileged place of God's saving action among us. The daily and Sunday celebrations are an opportunity to join Christ in the mystery of his journey through death to life. Each family should have one of its members in attendance at daily Mass.

Cross. Fasting and self-denial, freely chosen, help move us from self-centeredness and dispose us to

ready service of God and neighbor. Each Friday of Lent could well be observed as a day of fast and abstinence—voluntarily: light breakfast and lunch, one full meal, no meat, no snacks between meals.

Almsgiving is another means of defeating selfishness and serving the poor in concrete ways. In this time of Lent, the sacrifice of some luxuries and the curtailment of even legitimate pleasures can provide assistance to the needy, so that they may benefit from our Lenten living.

Holy Week. The forty days of our desert journey climax in the great celebrations of Holy Week. Participation in the community worship of Holy Week, especially the beautiful Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday, is the final stage of our march toward Easter.



Lent 1973  
Our Lady of Sorrows

### WHAT ABOUT FASTING AND ABSTINENCE?

These ancient practices are helpful to restoring a sense of the presence of God and can serve as a reminder that conversion of heart must be manifest in our words and action. While we are not bound to fast and abstinence under pain of sin, they are indeed serious responsibilities.

#### Abstinence

- Binds all Catholics over 14 years of age.
- Complete abstinence from meat is to be observed on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and every Friday of Lent.

#### Fast

- Binds all Catholics over 21 and under 59 years of age.
- The days of fast are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- On a day of fast one full meal is taken. Two other meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to one's needs; together they should not equal another full meal.
- Eating between meals is not permitted; but liquids, including milk or fruit juices, are allowed.
- When health or ability to work would be seriously affected by the fast, the law does not oblige.

### ALMSGIVING

Financial contributions, not out of our surplus, but out of our personal budgets, have long been a worthy penitential practice. If we decide not to eat between meals and thus identify ourselves with those who are hungry in our world then we'll likely save some money. This money can be a sacrificial gift to one or another charitable organization.

On April 11, the Fourth Sunday of Lent, the annual appeal for the Catholic Relief Services will be made. Pope Paul has asked American Catholics to direct these CRS monies to rebuild war-torn Southeast Asia. Our almsgiving can thus be a concrete step on the journey of reconciliation and healing.

Our Lady of Sorrows Parish  
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[These two panels are taken from a brochure publicizing the Lenten programs of Our Lady of Sorrows, Farmington, MI.]



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Three  
LENTEN WEEKDAYS

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In a descriptive "Introduction," the Lectionary for Mass announces that the Old Testament and Gospel readings for each day of the Lenten season "were chosen for their mutual relationship and for their treatment of various themes for Lenten instruction." Readings from John's Gospel had been scattered throughout the forty days; in this new (1969) lectionary, they are arranged in a semi-continuous order beginning on the Monday of the Fourth Week. The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Weeks contain an "optional Mass" which the Lectionary explains:

Since the readings about the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and Lazarus are assigned for Sundays only in Year A (1975, 1978, 1981, etc.) and are optional in Years B and C, additional Masses with these texts have been inserted at the beginning of the third, fourth, and fifth weeks. During years B and C they may be used on any day of these weeks in place of the assigned weekday readings.

The full text of the Scripture for each weekday, as well as of the responsorial psalm and the verses before the Gospel, is available in the booklet, Not By Bread Alone (\$1.00 from Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556). The booklet can serve as a preparation and planning aid for liturgy committees and celebrants, as well as a source of meditation and prayer for all.

The following paragraphs are an attempt to organize the readings of the Lenten weekdays around the theme of "choosing life." They may be used as idea-starters for homilies or as introductory comments at the beginning of Mass.

AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Thursday  
[221]

Today's readings explain yesterday's sign of ashes: life comes through death (Luke). We must choose—to lose life or to find it. "Choose life!" urges Deuteronomy.

Friday  
[222]

If we do choose life, then we must truly die (Matthew). There must be no play-acting, no hypocrisy, no superficial penance (Isaiah).

Saturday  
[223]

Choosing to live through dying does not mean that we love death. It is not self-hatred that motivates us; rather, we seek healing (Isaiah, Luke).

## FIRST WEEK

Monday  
[225]

Choosing to live through the penance of dying is never selfish: it should open us to the needs of others (Leviticus, Matthew). Lent cannot be an exercise in private piety.

Tuesday  
[226]

The life that we choose is in relation to God, who is our Father. Today, Jesus teaches us a Lenten prayer: mercy and forgiveness in deed as well as in word (Matthew).

Wednesday  
[227]

It has been a week since we chose life. Today we are reassured that God's mercy come to those who turn to him (Jonah). Jesus is the sign of that forgiveness (Luke).

Thursday  
[228]

We cannot demand that God give us life. We hand ourselves over to him in trust (Esther), confident that he will respond (Matthew).

Friday  
[229]

The choice of life (Ezekiel) should have practical consequences: it creates community by opening us to reconciliation with others (Matthew).

Saturday  
[230]

In choosing God, we choose to follow his ways (Deuteronomy). Our decision leads us to loving imitation of God's own standards (Matthew).

## SECOND WEEK

Monday  
[231]

Forgiveness is God's greatest gift (Daniel), given abundantly to those who choose to live through dying (Luke).

Tuesday  
[232]

Self-deception can be deeply rooted, so today's texts invite us to an examination of conscience (Isaiah): Is our penance a sham; our choice of life, a mere formality?

Wednesday  
[233]

The paschal mystery of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection is the pattern for those who

choose life. We personally and deliberately take into our hands his cup (Matthew). Obviously, we look to God for strength (Jeremiah).

Thursday  
[234]

If we do not choose life, we become like the rich man of today's Gospel: closed heart, closed hands (Luke). The direction of our heart makes all the difference (Jeremiah).

Friday  
[235]

Good Friday is a month away. A forerunner (Joseph: Genesis) and a parable (unproductive tenants: Matthew) point to the mystery of Christ's passion. His rejection is the source of our healing.

Saturday  
[236]

The parable of the prodigal son (Luke) is actually the description of a prodigal father whose love and mercy are always ready to welcome those who choose life and seek him.

### THIRD WEEK

Optional Mass  
[237]

Those who choose life come to Christ for the living water for which they thirst (John). That water is a symbol of the Spirit, given to us in Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

Monday  
[238]

The story of the Syrian general Naaman (II Kings) reminds us that conversion begins in the waters of Baptism. That initial gift of life should not be rejected (Luke).

Tuesday  
[239]

We who have been forgiven must be faithful to forgiveness. Our prayer today (Daniel) is that we may escape the blindness of the unjust steward (Matthew).

Wednesday  
[240]

If we have chosen life, there must be no ambiguity to our decision. Today's readings (Deuteronomy, Matthew) are a call to foreswear slackening or fence-straddling.

Thursday  
[241]

At this point in Lent, our resolve may be weakening. The choice of life through dying is a life-and-death matter. Either we listen and heed—or we do not (Jeremiah, Luke).

Friday  
[242]

Our choice is not a complex one—we must decide to love. The call to penance and conversion is a call to the refreshing simplicity (Hosea) of love (Mark).

Saturday  
[243]

Humility is the recognition of our true situation. We cannot fool ourselves (Luke). Why should we try to fool God (Hosea)?

#### FOURTH WEEK

Optional Mass  
[244]

Darkness vs. light (Micah), blindness vs. sight (John)—today's texts remind us that Christ opened our eyes at Baptism. We should be seeing all our choices in a Christian perspective.

Monday  
[245]

The week begins with a repetition of the Lenten theme: life or death. It is God who gives life (Isaiah) to those who believe and trust (John).

Tuesday  
[246]

Another accent on Baptism, the introduction to the paschal mystery: its waters not only cure (John) but also promote growth (Ezekiel).

Wednesday  
[247]

Jesus' choice of life through dying is explained. He is the only Son of the Father, the total sign of the Father's love for us (John). In Jesus, the Father says to us: "I will never forget you!" (Isaiah).

Thursday  
[248]

But Jesus is more than a sign of love, and he asks more than our admiration. His words and works as mediator (Exodus) challenge us to make our choice, yes or no (John).

Friday  
[249]

Good Friday is two weeks away, and we are faced with the hostility of evil that brings death (Wisdom). To choose that evil is not to know God (John). That choice brings non-vivifying death.

Saturday  
[250]

Make no mistake: our choice of life has to lead us through death (Jeremiah). The Messiah himself had to suffer before entering into his glory (John).



FIFTH WEEK

Optional Mass  
[251]

Here is what happens when we choose life: "Whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life" (II Kings, John).

Monday  
[252]

Our choosing must not be a selfish grasping of grace. The mercy given to us is meant also for others, who need forgiveness more than judgment (Daniel, John).

Tuesday  
[253]

It is in Jesus' suffering and death that God reveals the mystery of his love: he wants to save us from the death of sin (Numbers, John).

Wednesday  
[254]

We are called to total worship of God, in all we say or do (Daniel). We are sons and daughters of the Father through Jesus; therefore, we are totally free and available (John).

Thursday  
[255]

God does not deceive us who choose him and trust him (Genesis), but we can fool ourselves by the most monstrous deception of all: infidelity to the Word we profess to believe (John).

Friday  
[256]

Good Friday is now one week off. As Jesus approaches the hour of his sacrifice (John), he is supported by his union with the Father. Our choice of life must feed off the same trust (Jeremiah).

Saturday  
[257]

A final summation, just before Holy Week: the purpose of Jesus' suffering and death that lead to resurrection, and the purpose of our choosing to follow his path to life. Through the work of Jesus God wants to gather us as his people.

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Four  
SUGGESTIONS

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This chapter is composed of various suggestions for celebration taken from the questionnaires that were distributed at the end of Lent 1973. The last part of the chapter presents services of prayer and penance.

1. Ash Wednesday. "Gave out small pieces of burlap as people received ashes, to remind them of ancient sackcloth. They could keep the burlap in wallet or purse to remind them of the purpose of Lent."
2. Wednesdays of Lent. One community set aside every Wednesday, from Ash Wednesday to the Wednesday of Holy Week, as a day of public fasting and prayer. Prayer services in church, using modified form of Liturgy of Hours, were well attended.
3. "Day of Recollection." A smaller parish provided a mini-day of recollection from 10:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. on every Sunday of the Lenten season. The program included three brief conferences, Mass, a light lunch, and the Stations of the Cross. Some ninety different individuals participated in some or all of the mini-days.
4. Mass Program. "Our most successful Lenten program was a Thursday morning Mass for the women of the parish. The program began several weeks before Ash Wednesday with a Mass prepared by a small group, followed by a planning session in the rectory. It was suggested that groups of women plan a liturgy for each Thursday during Lent. At this planning session, themes were suggested and volunteers were solicited for each theme. Each Thursday morning we began with Mass at 9:30 and continued after Mass with coffee and discussion at the rectory. The themes selected were: Joy of the Kingdom, Peace, Forgiveness, Suffering, Death, Anxiety, Friendship, and Thanksgiving. Babysitting service (paid for by the parish) was provided for children, to facilitate the attendance of their mothers. Participation ranged from a high of 60 to a low of 35. A goodly number wanted to continue the Thursday morning Mass after Lent, and it is now established on a monthly basis. Many of those who participated felt that they had grown spiritually from the program, both the planning and the liturgies. New friendships were formed."
5. Home Mass Programs. According to testimony, Lent seems a good time for initiating, revitalizing, or continuing home Masses.

6. Stations of the Cross. A parish staff of three priests and a deacon divided up the stations among themselves. Each person then wrote meditations on the stations assigned to him and composed appropriate prayers. The total staff "concelebrated" the Stations, each member doing the stations he had worked on.
7. Lenten Census. One parish found the Lenten season a good time for making a door-to-door census of the community. It offered many opportunities for evangelization.
8. Palm Sunday. One church solved the problem of visibility during the blessing of palms by having the celebrant conduct those opening ceremonies from the choir balcony. Very effective.
9. Holy Thursday. A number of communities add to Holy Thursday the celebration of first communion or, at least, the attendance of those who have made their first communion during the preceding year. One parish emphasized these first communions as a passing on of the Christian heritage, similar to the purpose that animates the questions ("Why is this night different?") at the Jewish Passover. Another community highlighted the Gospel message by conducting the washing of the feet during the reading, instead of immediately after. The priestly commitment inserted into the Chrism Mass is being used also at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper in many places; in one community, it was the president of the parish council who, as representative of the people, asked the questions of the ministers. In regard to the repository, a mid-western parish arranged a schedule of adoration on the basis of families, not just parish societies or individuals.
10. Good Friday. One parish with a very large crucifix used a variation to good effect for the veneration of the cross. To emphasize the act of faith involved, the people were asked to put their finger into the nail-prints of the image.
11. Easter. It was a lot of work, reported one parish, but well worth it, to decorate the sanctuary at every Mass on Easter morning just as is done during the Easter Vigil on the preceding evening. Of course, this meant stripping the sanctuary down at the conclusion of each Mass, but the results more than repaid the effort.
12. The Passover Questions. As mentioned above, under no. 9, "Holy Thursday," one parish celebrated first communions in the spirit of passing on a heritage. The method used was an adaptation of the Passover questions, keyed to the readings assigned for Holy Thursday. The format was as follows:



After the Opening Prayer, before the first reading, the youngest boy asks the first question:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

A commentator responds:

This is the night of the Last Supper. Jesus gathered with his disciples, just as we do right now around this table. Our Jewish friends remember at their Passover service how God helped them to pass over from slavery into freedom, in the Exodus from Egypt long ago. And we remember how Jesus delivered us from the slavery of sin and death, because he endured the death of the cross and passed over into the risen life which he now shares with us.

The Reader: A reading from the Book of Exodus ...

Boy: Why do we eat from one bread tonight?

Commentator: This is the night that Jesus said over the bread, "This is my body which is given for you." We eat that one bread as a sign of our unity in Jesus who gave himself to bring us together—with God and with each other. We eat it in thankfulness for all that God has done for us.

Boy: Why do we drink tonight from the fruit of the vine?

Commentator: Jesus said this night that we would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the Kingdom of God comes. That Kingdom comes whenever, in the name of Jesus, we bring mercy, peace, and unity to our world. We drink the cup as a pledge that we will continue to build the Kingdom.

Reader: A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians ...

The boy asks the final question immediately before the Gospel:

Why do we do special works to serve and help each other?

Commentator: We do these acts of service because this is the night when Jesus our leader and lord gave us the

example. He washed the  
even though he was their  
am in the midst of you as

Celebrant: The Lord be with you. [

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SERVICE ONE: A Meditation on the Passion

This is a very simple service, but it does  
cello, and alto. It combines Scripture and  
music. After the entrance and opening pra  
as follows:

First Reading: Peter's Denial (Luke  
[after a brief homily and

Bach: Erbarme dich, from St. Matth

Second Reading: Lamb of God (John  
[after a brief homily and

Bach: Agnus Dei, from the B-minor M

Third Reading: Death of Christ (John  
[after a brief homily and

Bach: Es ist vollbracht

The celebration concludes with an appropri

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candle]

Reader Two: Matthew 26: 31-35

Candle Two: I recognize this shadow of desertion, for I have run when there's trouble. [Blows out candle]

Reader One: Luke 22: 39-45

Candle Three: I do not recognize this agony, for I have never known it; I do not search with such intensity to know the will of God and to do it. [Blows out candle]

Reader Two: Luke 22: 47-53

Candle Four: I recognize this betrayal, for I have betrayed those I love, I have betrayed what I believe in. [Blows out candle]

Reader One: Luke 22: 54-62

Candle Five: I recognize this denial, for I too have been loyal only when convenient. [Blows out candle]

Reader Two: Matthew 27: 27-31

Candle Six: I recognize this mocking and scourging, for I have made fun of others, I have scourged others in word and deed, I have denied them dignity. [Blows out candle]

Reader One: Matthew 27: 15-18, 20-24

Candle Seven: I recognize this rage and irresponsibility, for I have allowed others to sway me, I have shirked my duty. [Blows out candle]

Reader Two: Luke 23: 33-34, John 19: 23-24, Luke 23: 39-43

Candle Eight: I do not recognize the mercy and compassion of the dying Jesus, for I do not ask God to forgive my enemies, I have no concern for those in difficulty. [Blows out candle]

Reader One: John 19: 25-27

Candle Nine: I do not recognize this care of the dying Jesus,

for I have neglected those I love, I have not listened to those with whom I share my life.

Reader Two: Matthew 27: 45-47

Candle Ten: I do not recognize this cry of loneliness, for I am never alone, surrounded by activity, by busy-ness, by noise. [Blows out candle]

Reader One: John 19: 28-30

Candle Eleven: I do not recognize this death, because I do not want to die. [Blows out candle]

Reader Two: Luke 23: 47-49

Candle Twelve: Jesus is dead. Am I sorry? I do not recognize the power of this death for my salvation. I cannot say what the centurion said. I cannot beat my breast as did those who witnessed this scene. [Blows out candle]

After a pause for silent reflection, each of the candle-bearers speaks the following lines in turn. As he speaks, the first candle-bearer relights his candle; he passes the light to the second as he speaks ... and so on, down the line:

Candle One: I have betrayed. I am sorry.

Candle Two: I have deserted. I am sorry.

Candle Three: I have sinned. I am sorry.

Candle Four: I have faltered. I am sorry.

Candle Five: I have been disloyal. I am sorry.

Candle Six: I have neglected my duties. I am sorry.

Candle Seven: I have been irresponsible. I am sorry.

Candle Eight: I have withheld forgiveness. I am sorry.

Candle Nine: I have not cared. I am sorry.

Candle Ten: I have refused to repent. I am sorry.

Candle Eleven: I have denied my God. I am sorry.

Candle Twelve: I have not been sorry. Now I am.

Reader One: Romans 3: 23-26.

Reader Two: Romans 6: 12-14.

All exit in silence.

SERVICE THREE: Communal Penance—Love

After the opening hymn, the celebrant greets the people in the words of I John 4: 7-10.

[Priest:]               The Lord be with you.  
[People:]              And also with you.  
[Priest:]              Let us pray.

(Pause for silence)

God our Father, at your invitation we have come together as one family. We have come to set things right with you and with each other. Even though our sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; even though they be crimson red, they will become white as wool. We seek this forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[People:]              Amen.

First Reading:       Romans 12: 1-2, 9-18

Gospel:               Matthew 5: 1-12

(Homily)

The examination of conscience follows the homily. All kneel while the lector reads, slowly and meditatively, I Corinthians 13: 1-2, 4-7, 13. At the end, all recite together the "I confess" from the penitential rite of the Order of Mass.

During the time of individual confessions, the singing of hymns is interspersed with the following passages of Scripture:

Isaiah 54: 4-10	God's love for us
John 10: 10b-18	The Good Shepherd
Deuteronomy 6: 3-9	The great commandment
Luke 10: 25-37	The good samaritan
John 15: 9-17	A disciple's love
Galatians 5: 13-26	Freedom and charity
Philippians 2: 1-11	Christ's humility
I John 3: 18-24	Real and active love
Colossians 3: 12-17	Living in love and thanksgiving

After the hearing of confessions and a group penance, the final blessing is given, followed by a closing hymn of thanksgiving and praise.

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Five

A TENEBRAE SERVICE

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[This chapter is the work of Rev. Gordon Truitt, of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, a doctoral candidate in theology and liturgy at Catholic University, Washington, D. C.]

Tenebrae is a Latin word meaning "shadows" or "darkness." It is the title for the historic offices of Matins and Lauds celebrated during the night—usually as the last service of the day—on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of Holy Week. It is a service of silence and reflection in preparation for the solemn celebration of the three great days in the Christian calendar.

The dramatic feature of these services is the gradual extinction of all the lights in the church except for a "Christ candle." This candle is removed from view during the service leaving the church in darkness, symbolizing the apparent victory of the powers of darkness as Christ suffers death. A loud noise is then made at this part of the service (usually by the slamming of a book or the slapping of the hand on a hard surface), suggesting the earthquake of the Passion narratives. The restoration of the Christ candle is a foreshadowing of the resurrection.

The service of Tenebrae on Wednesday evening of Holy Week is an appropriate way to introduce the three Holy Days. Because of the work demanded for the celebrations of Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and because the parish staff should take these three days for prayer and meditation, it is not recommended that there be parish celebrations of Tenebrae on Thursday and Friday evenings.

### The Service

The ministers (celebrant, two or more readers, acolyte) enter in silence and take their places in the sanctuary. In a prominent location: a lectern, and a seven-branched candelabra with all the candles lit. The lights in church may be dimmed already, but there should be sufficient light to read by.

The service alternates between silence, recitation or singing of psalms, readings (mostly from the Lamentations of Jeremiah), and vocal prayers by the celebrant. The psalms may be recited antiphonally or sung in that fashion (with proper explanation beforehand).



The service begins with Psalm 69:

At the conclusion of Psalm 69, the first candle is extinguished.

The first reading is then proclaimed, Lamentations 1: 1-14.

At the end of the reading, the sec-  
ond candle is extinguished.

Psalm 74 is then recited or sung:

Why, O God, have you cast us  
off forever?  
Why does your anger smolder  
against the sheep of your  
pasture?

<sup>2</sup> Remember your flock which you  
built up of old,  
the tribe you redeemed as your  
inheritance,  
Mount Zion, where you took  
up your abode.

<sup>4</sup> Your foes roar triumphantly in  
your shrine;  
they have set up their tokens of  
victory,

<sup>9</sup> Deeds on our behalf we do not  
see; there is no prophet now,  
and no one of us knows how  
long. . . .

<sup>10</sup> How long, O God, shall the foe  
blaspheme?  
Shall the enemy revile your  
name forever?

<sup>11</sup> Why draw back your hand  
and keep your right hand idle  
beneath your cloak?

<sup>18</sup> Remember how the enemy has  
blasphemed you, O LORD,  
and how a stupid people has  
reviled your name.

<sup>19</sup> Give not to the vulture the life of  
your dove;  
be not forever unmindful of  
the lives of your afflicted  
ones.

<sup>20</sup> Look to your covenant,  
for the hiding places in the  
land and the plains are full  
of violence.

<sup>21</sup> May the humble not retire in  
confusion;  
may the afflicted and the poor  
praise your name.

<sup>2</sup> Save me, O God,  
for the waters threaten my life;  
<sup>3</sup> I am sunk in the abysmal swamp  
where there is no foothold;  
I have reached the watery  
depths;  
the flood overwhelms me.  
<sup>4</sup> I am wearied with calling,  
my throat is parched;  
My eyes have failed  
with looking for my God.

<sup>6</sup> O God, you know my folly,  
and my faults are not hid from  
you.

<sup>7</sup> Let not those who wait for you  
be put to shame through me,  
O Lord, GOD of hosts.  
Let not those who seek you blush  
for me,

O God of Israel,  
<sup>8</sup> Since for your sake I bear insult,  
and shame covers my face.

<sup>9</sup> I have become an outcast to my  
brothers,  
a stranger to my mother's  
sons,

<sup>10</sup> Because zeal for your house  
consumes me,  
and the insults of those who  
blaspheme you fall upon me.

<sup>11</sup> I humbled myself with fasting,  
and this was made a reproach  
to me.

<sup>12</sup> I made sackcloth my garment,  
and I became a byword for  
them.

<sup>13</sup> They who sit at the gate gossip  
about me,  
and drunkards made me the  
butt of their songs.

<sup>20</sup> You know my reproach, my  
shame and my ignominy;  
before you are all my foes.

<sup>21</sup> Insult has broken my heart, and  
I am weak,  
I looked for sympathy, but  
there was none;  
for comforters, and I found  
none.

<sup>22</sup> Rather they put gall in my food,  
and in my thirst they gave me  
vinegar to drink.

<sup>30</sup> But I am afflicted and in pain;  
let your saving help, O God,  
protect me.

<sup>31</sup> I will praise the name of God in  
song,  
and I will glorify him with  
thanksgiving;

<sup>32</sup> This will please the LORD more  
than oxen  
or bullocks with horns and  
divided hooves;

<sup>33</sup> "See, you lowly ones, and be  
glad;  
you who seek God, may your  
hearts be merry!"

<sup>34</sup> For the LORD hears the poor,  
and his own who are in bonds  
he spurns not.

After Psalm 74, the third candle  
is extinguished.

The second reading, Lamentations 3: 19-33, is proclaimed, at the end of which the fourth candle is extinguished.

This is followed by the recitation or singing of Psalm 77, at the end of which the fifth candle is extinguished:

After the third reading, I Corinthians 1: 18-25, the sixth candle is extinguished. A brief homily is preached, after which all stand for the Benedictus:

[Leader:]  
<sup>68</sup> "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel  
because he has visited and  
ransomed his people.  
<sup>69</sup> He has raised a horn of saving  
strength for us  
in the house of David his  
servant,

[All:]  
<sup>70</sup> As he promised through the  
mouths of his holy ones,  
the prophets of ancient times:  
<sup>71</sup> Salvation from our enemies  
and from the hands of all our  
foes.  
<sup>72</sup> He has dealt mercifully with our  
fathers  
and remembered the holy  
covenant he made,

[Leader:]  
<sup>73</sup> The oath he swore to Abraham  
our father he would grant us:  
<sup>74</sup> that, rid of fear and delivered  
from the enemy,  
<sup>75</sup> We should serve him devoutly  
and through all our days  
be holy in his sight.

[All:]  
<sup>76</sup> And you, O child, shall be called  
prophet of the Most High;  
For you shall go before the Lord  
to prepare straight paths for  
him,  
<sup>77</sup> Giving his people a knowledge of  
salvation  
in freedom from their sins.  
<sup>78</sup> All this is the work of the  
kindness of our God;  
he, the Dayspring, shall visit us  
in his mercy  
<sup>79</sup> To shine on those who sit in  
darkness and in the shadow  
of death,  
to guide our feet into the way  
of peace."  
<sup>80</sup> The child grew up and matured in  
spirit. He lived in the desert until  
the day when he made his public  
appearance in Israel.

<sup>2</sup> Aloud to God I cry;  
aloud to God, to hear me;  
<sup>3</sup> on the day of my distress I seek  
the Lord.  
By night my hands are stretched  
out without flagging;  
my soul refuses comfort.  
<sup>4</sup> When I remember God, I moan;  
when I ponder, my spirit grows  
faint.  
<sup>5</sup> You keep my eyes watchful;  
I am troubled and cannot  
speak.  
<sup>6</sup> I consider the days of old;  
the years long past I  
remember.  
In the night I meditate in my  
heart;  
I ponder, and my spirit broods:  
<sup>8</sup> "Will the Lord reject forever  
and nevermore be favorable?  
<sup>9</sup> Will his kindness utterly cease,  
his promise fail for all  
generations?  
<sup>10</sup> Has God forgotten pity?  
Does he in anger withhold his  
compassion?"  
<sup>11</sup> And I say, "This is my sorrow,  
that the right hand of the Most  
High is changed."  
<sup>12</sup> I remember the deeds of the  
LORD;  
yes, I remember your wonders  
of old.  
<sup>13</sup> And I meditate on your works;  
your exploits I ponder.  
  
<sup>14</sup> O God, your way is holy;  
what great god is there like our  
God?  
<sup>15</sup> You are the God who works  
wonders;  
among the peoples you have  
made known your power.  
<sup>16</sup> With your strong arm you  
redeemed your people,  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

All then kneel at the end of the  
Benedictus.

[Leader:] Christ became obedient for us to death,  
[All:] Even to death on a cross.  
[Leader:] And so God has exalted him.  
[All:] And given him a name above every name.

At this point, the Christ is removed from the stand and taken, still lit, to a place from which it cannot be seen.

[Celebrant:] Let us pray (the response is "Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on us").

Because we are sinners, we pray to the Lord.

Because we are in darkness, we pray to the Lord.

Through our holy fasting and our silences, we pray to the Lord.

Because of the sacrifice of the Cross, we pray to the Lord.

To prepare for the celebration of Easter, we pray to the Lord.

Father, we are preparing to celebrate once more the death and resurrection of your Son. Fill us with the wisdom of the Cross, teach us the meaning of this great sacrifice. Through the passion and death of Jesus, renew our lives, restore us to union with you, and grant us peace. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Spirit, as one God, for ever and ever.

[All:] Amen.

The Church is then cast into complete darkness for a few moments, and a loud noise is made. When the sound dies away, the Christ candle is restored (still lit) to its place on the stand. A few lights are turned on and all leave in silence.

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Six

LENTEN DAYS AT HOME

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This chapter presents two formats for prayer in the home during the days of Lent 1974. The first format, which begins immediately below takes the form of a "table grace":

- (1) Invitation to Prayer - recited by one of the parents;
- (2) Word of God - Scripture read by a member of the family;  
the reading is followed by a few moments of  
silent reflection;
- (3) Prayer - the brief service concludes with a prayer recited  
by one of the parents.

The second format is similar, although it is not directly linked to mealtime. It is distributed in the form of a brochure with ten panels, reproduced below on pages 53-57. The format itself is described in the first two panels, given on page 53.

SUNDAY

Invitation to Prayer

Let us thank God our Father  
who has showered us with his gifts;  
let us remember his invitation  
to share with others  
less fortunate than ourselves.

Word of God (Sirach 4: 1-4, 10)

My son, rob not the poor man of his livelihood;  
force not the eyes of the needy to turn away.  
A hungry man grieve not,  
a needy man anger not;  
Do not exasperate the downtrodden;  
delay not to give to the needy.  
A beggar in distress do not reject;  
avert not your face from the poor.  
Thus you will be like a son to the Most High,  
and he will be more tender to you than a mother.

Prayer

We thank you, Father,  
for you have promised riches to the poor.  
Your Son Jesus lived with the poor in weakness

and raised their eyes above the hopeless horizon.  
Send us your Spirit  
to help us understand  
that we are invited to share our riches.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (Matthew 25: 35-36, 40)

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me. As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me."

Prayer

God our Father,  
may your Spirit gather us  
around this table (today/tonight)  
in union with all who witness to your love.  
Help us to give without measure  
so that the world may become  
truly a home for each and every person.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (Mark 12: 41-44)

Taking a seat opposite the treasury, Jesus observed the crowd putting money into the collection box. Many of the wealthy put in sizable amounts; but one poor widow came and put in two small copper coins worth a few cents. He called his disciples over and told them: "I want you to observe that this poor widow contributed more than all the others who donated to the treasury. They gave from their surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all that she had to live on."

Prayer

God our Father,  
you always multiply bread for us

and we have much in surplus.  
Change our hearts, Lord,  
and make them less craving of profit  
and more attentive to the poor and needy.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (I John 3: 17-18)

I ask you, how can God's love survive in a man  
who has enough of this world's goods  
yet closes his heart to his brother  
when he sees him in need?

Little children,  
let us love in deed and in truth  
and not merely talk about it.

Prayer

Let us pray (today/tonight)  
for all the homeless  
and those forced to live in poor conditions;  
let us pray for strangers and lonely persons  
that they may be warmly received.  
Let us pray also  
for those who live in luxury  
that they may ever keep open to the needy  
both their hearts and their hands.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (II Corinthians 9: 6-7)

Let me say this much: He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone must give according to what he has decided; not sadly, not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Prayer

God our Father,  
be the source of our strength to fight poverty.



Send us your Spirit of light, the giver of life;  
through his wisdom, may we find the means  
to banish hunger and end all wars.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (Deuteronomy 15: 7-11)

If one of your kinsmen in any community is in need in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to him in his need. Instead, you shall open your hand to him and freely lend him enough to meet his need. When you give to him, give freely and not with ill will; for the Lord, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings. The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country.

Prayer

God our Father,  
(today/tonight) we pray for all those  
who give their lives in service to others,  
for those who carry out social work,  
for all who run charitable institutions  
and those who care for the sick.  
May they never do their charity  
merely to be seen by men;  
may they be ever mindful of you,  
Father, who always sees and rewards.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY

Invitation to Prayer

(as above)

Word of God (Isaiah 58: 6-8)

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:  
releasing those bound unjustly,  
untying the thongs of the yoke;  
Setting free the oppressed,  
breaking every yoke;  
Sharing your bread with the hungry,  
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;

Clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own.  
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your wound shall quickly be healed.

Prayer

Help us, Father,  
to help those who are unloved.  
All we have comes from you;  
we want to show our gratitude  
by loving others  
as you have loved us.  
Never let us put restrictions  
on our sharing and our giving.  
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The second format, which begins on the following page, is tied specifically to the days of Holy Week itself. The first two panels describe the structure of the brochure; the other eight present the days from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, inclusive.

# CHRIST HAS DIED CHRIST IS RISEN CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

The material presented in this folder, entitled "Jesus Christ At Life's Center," is intended to assist

## YOU

to move toward a spiritual renewal through serious reflection, prayer and resolution on the place of Jesus Christ in everyday life.



The folder is designed to be used by individuals for private reflection and prayer; by groups for communal participation, such as in a family, religious house or classroom; and by the clergy and laity in developing parish participation programs and devotions during the week. This folder may well serve as an aid for periodic reflection and examination of fidelity to the spiritual renewal, which is highly recommended.

The theme for each day is developed in five steps.

### SCRIPTURE

By reading the short passage presented from Sacred Scripture, our attention is focused on the theme of the day.

### REFLECTION

By thinking about the ideas contained in the reflection and applying them to our lives, we draw material for our prayerful conversation with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### PRAYER

By praying the words taken from the sacred liturgy on the day's theme, we unite our individual sentiments to the prayer of the universal Church.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

By performing the day's suggested practice, or some other practice which grew out of the day's theme, we make concrete our decision to be more Christ-like today.

### RESOLUTION

By resolving to follow a definite plan for the future, we begin a long-term renewal which will change our lives, and at the same time hopefully place Jesus Christ at life's center each and every day.

LET US GO UP TO JERUSALEM WITH HIM...

## PALM SUNDAY

### SCRIPTURE

"... he has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the Kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him, we gain freedom, the forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

### REFLECTION

In the thinking of the Eastern World, the king made life possible for the people. He protected them, cared for their needs and freed them to live unafraid. Are there areas still ruled by darkness in me? Am I denying the Kingship of Jesus Christ by refusing to love HIM?

MYSELF?

MY FAMILY?

OTHERS?

Have I welcomed Jesus Christ as my personal King in all aspects of my life?

### PRAYER

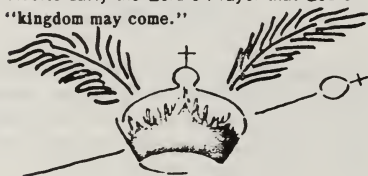
Almighty and eternal God, you have renewed all creation in your beloved Son, the King of the whole universe. May all the people of the earth, now torn apart by the wound of sin, become subject to the gentle rule of your only-begotten Son: Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Select one area of your life in which you will make Christ's Kingship grow today.

### RESOLUTION

Recite daily the Lord's Prayer that God's "kingdom may come."



## MONDAY <sup>OF</sup> HOLY WEEK

### SCRIPTURE

"When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:16-17).

### REFLECTION

We must accept the "bad news" in our lives that we have sinned, before we can accept the "good news" that Jesus calls us to forgiveness and healing.



### PRAYER

O Almighty and most kind God, you caused fresh water to flow from a rock to aid your thirsting people. Draw from our stony hearts tears of sorrow for our sins, so that we may be worthy of your mercy and pardon. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Let us admit our need to be healed, approaching Jesus for forgiveness "as we forgive those who trespass against us."

### RESOLUTION

Foster personal repentance by the grateful reception of divine healing in the Sacrament of Penance.

# HE WAS OBEDIENT.....UNTO DEATH

## TUESDAY <sup>OF</sup> HOLY WEEK WEDNESDAY <sup>OF</sup> HOLY WEEK

### SCRIPTURE

"And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus" (Mark 9:7-8).

### REFLECTION

The only Son, Jesus Christ, came on a mission from his Father. In him, the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons. The Father commands us to listen to his Son. Do I listen by modeling my daily life on the Life of Jesus, our way to the Father?

### PRAYER

O God, your only-begotten Son appeared in the substance of our flesh. May he who outwardly was like us, change us interiorly: Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Show that we are listening to God's only Son by putting aside today an aim for one of his "least brethren."

### RESOLUTION

Listen with eagerness when the Word of God is proclaimed during the liturgy.

"Love as I have loved."

### SCRIPTURE

"He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And sadness came over him, and great distress. Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with me.' And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. 'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it'" (Matthew 26:37-40).

### REFLECTION

Every human life is haunted by some suffering and pain. Even though he was perfectly submissive to the will of his Father, in the presence of suffering Jesus Christ trembled, shook and experienced the weakness of the flesh, crying out to his Father for relief. Does suffering and pain bring us to experience the need for God, or does it plummet us into despair? Like Jesus, have we made our personal sufferings redemptive?

### PRAYER

O Almighty and Eternal God, it was your will that our Savior should become man and suffer upon the cross as a model of humility for all mankind. Grant that we may follow the example of his patience and share in his resurrection. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Make sacred today some trial, some disappointment, some suffering by uniting it with the sufferings of Christ on the cross.

### RESOLUTION

Redeem the pain, the effort, the inconvenience involved in the service of others through union with Christ's redemptive sufferings.



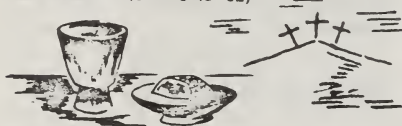


# "THIS IS MY SON..."

## HOLY THURSDAY

### SCRIPTURE

"Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:48-52).



### REFLECTION

The "Living bread" which Jesus gives us is himself in the Holy Eucharist. By this heavenly food we are brought to live the life of Christ more profoundly and share more intensely in his saving work among men. To eat this bread is to live. Not to eat it is starvation. Only a fool starves himself.

### PRAYER

O God, we possess a lasting memorial of your passion in this wondrous sacrament. Grant that we may so venerate the mysteries of your body and blood that we may always feel within ourselves the effects of your redemption. You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist or make a Spiritual Communion today.

### RESOLUTION

Nourish yourself by participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and receiving Holy Communion more frequently.

## GOOD FRIDAY

### SCRIPTURE

"This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name:

Out of his infinite glory, may he give you power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).

### REFLECTION

The whole of Jesus' life shows forth his love for us. Through love he became man for us, worked for us, lived for us, suffered for us, died for us and rose for us. Each of us can say with Saint Paul: "He loved me and delivered himself up for me" (Galations 2:20). Jesus Christ has no more ardent desire than to see enkindled in us the same fire of love for his Father and mankind with which his own heart is consumed.

### PRAYER

O God, through your mercy we possess the treasures of your love in the heart of your Son, the same heart that we wounded by our sins. Grant that we may make reparation to him for our faults by offering him the worship of our devotion. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### PRACTICE

Fast or abstain today, offering this sacrifice to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for sin.

### RESOLUTION

Renew your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by faithfulness to the Daily Offering and attendance at Mass and reception of the Eucharist on the First Fridays.



## CHRIST IS

### HOLY SATURDAY

#### SCRIPTURE

"... the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end'" (Luke 1:30-33).

#### REFLECTION

Jesus, who is our only Savior, came to us through a unique person — Mary. Mary was unique in her openness to the Spirit, who overshadowed her. Mary was unique in her responsiveness to the power of the Most High. Mary continues her unique role toward all the redeemed, for Jesus was first-born of many brethren. For us individually and for all who are the Church, Mary is still Mother. She shows us in her life the ideal of the Christian's response to grace. She prays ceaselessly for all the followers of her Son.

#### PRAYER

O God, it was through the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary that you bestowed the gift of eternal life upon mankind. Grant that we may feel the powerful intercession of Mary, through whom we were privileged to receive the giver of life, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord: Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Offer the Rosary or some other Marian prayer today for the whole Church, and particularly for Pope Paul VI.

#### RESOLUTION

Include some devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in your daily prayer life.



### EASTER

#### SCRIPTURE

"So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:42-44).

#### REFLECTION

We are awake and we prepare for the glorious coming of the Lord by the works of justice and peace. Our daily life of love and service builds the Kingdom until he comes again.

#### PRAYER

O Lord, stir up your might and come! Be our protector and liberator; rescue us from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins and lead us to our salvation: You who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen

#### SUGGESTED PRACTICE

Prepare for Christ's return by showing concern today for someone who is alone and lonely.

#### RESOLUTION

Prepare for Christ's coming by continuing personal renewal and promoting social good.

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Seven

EASTER BLESSINGS

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The Easter blessings of food owe their origin to the fact that certain foods (flesh meats and milk products, including eggs) were part of Lenten abstinence over a period of many centuries. When the Easter feast would conclude the rigorous fast and these foods could appear again on the family table, the people showed their joy and gratitude by bringing the food to the church first for a blessing. This custom is, of course, widespread throughout Eastern Europe and was introduced to this country by immigrants from those regions. The tradition of giving Easter baskets on the feast of the resurrection is also an offshoot of this original blessing of food.

The key items blessed on Easter, the feast of the Lord's Passover from death to life, are the very items prescribed for the ancient Passover meal in the Old Testament: lamb, bread, wine, bitter herbs. The traditional list is as follows:

Lamb. Either meat or symbolic in the form of cake or butter. The lamb is the Passover food by whose blood the Israelites were saved. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, our Pasch.

Horseradish. In the Old Testament, the bitter herbs serve as a reminder of the bitterness of life in Egypt. For us, they recall the sufferings through which Jesus entered into glory.

Bread. An obvious pointer to the Eucharist, the food of our earthly pilgrimage, the true bread of everlasting life.

Wine. The drink of the Passover meal and of the Last Supper. Wine gladdens the heart and gives joy, both of them Easter emotions par excellence.

Eggs. Symbol of hope and resurrection, for Christ comes from the tomb just as the chick issues from the shell. Because of this association, the eggs should be decorated with symbols of Christ and of Easter.

Ham. Forbidden by the Old Law, now eaten to celebrate the freedom of the New Law inaugurated by the resurrection.

Sausage. An ethnic addition, to enhance the celebration.

A suggested blessing of these foods may take place as follows:

This service begins with the reading of Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14 (the first reading of Holy Thursday), to put the blessing into the context of the Passover.

[Priest:]	Our help is in the Name of the Lord.
[All:]	Who made heaven and earth.
[Priest:]	The Lord be with you.
[All:]	And also with you.
[Priest:]	Let us pray.

(After a period of silent prayer, the following blessings are used, as is appropriate)

#### Lamb and Other Meats

Father, Giver of all good things, look with favor upon these lambs and meat products, for you commanded our ancestors in the faith to partake of lamb on the night of the Passover. Bless + these lambs and meats prepared for our celebration in honor of the Passover of your Son from death to life, for he is the true Paschal Lamb by whose blood we are saved. As we enjoy these foods blessed and sanctified by you, may we obtain your blessing of health through the cross and resurrection of your Son. This we ask through him, our risen Lord. Amen.

#### Bread

Almighty Father, grant that this bread may be blessed + by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. For all who partake, may it aid the salvation of their souls and the healing of their bodies. May it be a defense against all disease and a protection against every attack of our enemy. This we ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought life and salvation to the world. Amen.

#### Eggs

Father, let your blessing + come upon these eggs, so that they may be a healthful food for your people who eat them in thankful celebration of the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who now lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

#### Other Food

Father, your Word suffices to make all things holy. Pour out your blessing + upon this food, and grant that anyone using it with a grateful heart in honor of the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and keeping your law and will, may re-

ceive from you health in body and protection of soul. This we ask through the power of the resurrection of your Son, Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The priest may sprinkle the food with holy water)

An abbreviated blessing of food, such as the one given below (from the fifteenth century ritual of the Synod of Piotrkow), may be reproduced in the parish bulletin for use at home as a table grace on Easter Sunday:

[Leader:] This is the day the Lord has made, Alleluia!

[All:] Let us rejoice and be glad, Alleluia!

[Leader:] For Christ is risen, Alleluia!

[All:] He is risen, indeed, Alleluia!

[Leader or All:] Father, whose only Son blessed the loaves in  
the desert,  
Graciously give us bread for life's needs.  
Almighty Father, let not your gifts lead us to sin;  
Let not the sparkling wine induce us to misdeeds.  
While we enjoy our feast, let us also in charity  
Remember all those who suffer want and hunger.  
And let not the pleasures of this life stifle  
The inspirations of your Holy Spirit.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Easter Vigil

In the strangeness and the splendor of this night  
we, like so many who have gone before,  
are struck, and numbed, and filled with joy  
at the sight of boundless energy,  
at the wonder of the One  
we know as God,  
who is creator, still.  
For, know this, know it well—  
God is creator—  
first and always,  
molder of the spun-out web of dreams.

Yes, each of us has heard, and we have read  
of his creative touch  
that struck the orbit of the earth  
and set to spinning  
all the whirling universe.

Yes, we have read and we have known  
of his creative power in the midst of men  
which caused a single, splendid life  
to spring up once, so long ago, in Nazareth.

And with the advent of the God-man, Jesus,  
we have come to know and we have seen  
how God reached into darkness,  
how he molded and refined the darkness of the sleep of death,  
until that darkness shone like brightest day,  
until it glittered with the gleaming of a thousand suns.

For we have seen that our redeemer lives,  
We know that the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ  
(who is standing with his people now),  
will never die again.

And we have spun out images and stories  
to help us realize the glory of that Easter dawn:

The dawning of that Easter—  
a dream that could not be fulfilled!  
Until Christ spoke and told us:



Sleeper, wake! Your dream is true!  
No need to dream again,  
for I have conquered death.  
Now, death, where is your victory!  
Now, death, where is your sting!

The one who hung, so long ago, upon a cross  
stands risen in the Father's light,  
and the glory of a thousand thousand suns,  
reflected in his face,  
shines on our lives and in our hearts this night.

For know this—know it well—  
we too have risen with the Lord;  
we too will never die.

And all of us have felt the pull of glory,  
somehow, in our lives.  
And all of us have tried to answer it, somehow—  
to reach beyond the sleep of death,  
to strive to capture in our hands  
a love that never ends.

Yes, all of us have sought  
to share that beauty and that joy.

And this is truth,  
the truest word this Easter night—  
we only need to hear God's Word,  
not just with ears or mind,  
but with our heart, with every living inch of us.  
For, when the angel says:  
"He is not here,  
he has been raised,"  
that truth,  
that screaming, singing, most impossible of truths,  
is ours.

Not just the Lord was changed from death to life this night,  
but each of us, each one of us,  
need never fear the sleep of death again.

The chains are broken, scattered at our feet,  
and we are free.  
The world we know is lit by new fire now;  
its flame is kindled in the hearts of all  
who put aside their fears,  
who open up their hearts,  
who trust,



like little children in their parents' arms,  
in just such simple words as these:

"Why do you look among the dead  
for one who is alive?  
He is not here,  
he has been raised.  
Now go and carry this good news  
to brothers and to sisters everywhere."

And, O my friends,  
You must not be afraid—  
For Christ has conquered death this night  
and we are truly free.

— Rev. Gordon Truitt

